

# Mercy, Not Curiosity, The Mother of Medicine.

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BY

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*President of the Vegetarian Society.*

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## MERCY, NOT CURIOSITY, THE MOTHER OF MEDICINE.

BY PROFESSOR JOHN E. B. MAYOR.

*Address read at the opening of the Hospital of St Francis,  
145, New Kent Road, London, 19th April, 1898.*



AS the Athenians were mooting the introduction of gladiatorial shows — public sword-bouts — the Cynic Demonax (Lucian Demon. 57) stepped forward: "Stay, men of Athens; before you pass this measure, cast down the Altar of Mercy."

As such a witness against Moloch, such an Altar of Mercy, we open this Hospital. To this sanctuary generous hearts may entrust gifts, without fear of their abuse to ends of cruelty. Europe has too long been branded as the hell of animals. These wards, by their very existence, impeach false views of science. As Tennyson passionately cried: "Not art for art's sake, but art for art's sake and man's," so our presence to-day means this: "Not science for the selfish sake of science, not the sufferer as clinical material for the surgeon, but science for man's sake, surgeon for patient; priest for people, not people for priest. Meek mercy, not curiosity, cold-blooded, hell-born itch after forbidden fruit, the mother of saving medicine. *Though I understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and have no charity, I am nothing.*"

The mere name, Hospital of St. Francis, must awaken interest and arouse sluggish consciences. Like the Temperance Hospital, ours is a fact arresting the eye, and facts are stubborn things. As years roll on, and patients go forth cured, without drugs, without

strong drink, without flesh-meat, little by little clouds of error and prejudice will melt away before the light.

What shall we teach? Not the magic power of nostrums. Vain it were to soothe symptoms, to strike at branches of disease, while causes, roots of the mischief, roam at large. You cannot do ill and be well. Food and drink are not always means of life and health, often rather of disease and death. No draught or pill can appease the vengeance of outraged law. Live to eat, if you will, but look not for the health which God has prepared for those who, like Socrates, eat to live. Said Voltaire,\* in sad earnest: "Doctors are called in to work a miracle, the reconciliation of health with intemperance." We sons of St. Francis hold out no such hope. Like Michael, in Milton, we maintain "the rule of NOT TOO MUCH" for all who would fain "drop like ripe fruit" into the lap of Mother Earth. With Abernethy, we prescribe: "Live on sixpence a day, and earn it"; with my revered friend, the nonagenarian Dr. Döllinger, we lament: *L'homme ne meurt pas, il se tue*—

Away then with narcotics, stimulants, sedatives, Vimbos—the bull in a tea-cup,—and all other lying flatterers. Exercise, pure air, pure water, plain living, temperance, soberness, chastity, these will heal and keep you whole, or nothing will. The battle fought on Good Friday, by the Atbara River, gives us heart to preach temperance in season, out of season. In former wars, Turks and Zulus made surgeons marvel, so quickly did their wounds heal. Of late, both services have learnt a lesson; in all ranks there are abstainers. How were our British troops enabled to march 98 miles in four days? Beer was sent back to Cairo, and a trader's whisky was spent on thirsty sands. So General Gatacre had his chance, and made the men hard. Three thousand five hundred men, without one on the sick list. This is to-day's good news. Since the battle the wounded are doing well. Their blood had not been poisoned by the drink.

Knowledge of laws of health has already cleansed drains, cleared away warrens, where children wallowed like pigs in the mire, and so lowered the death-rate in cities. It remains to cleanse the body of man. Victims of small-pox were dosed with brandy, swaddled in blankets, stifled in close rooms, till Thomas Sydenham, like Charles Kingsley in our day, drew the curtains, opened windows, and so left Nature free to work a cure. To drop venom into the veins was left for later wisdom.

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\* *Dictionnaire Philosophique: Médecins*:—"Rien n'est plus ridicule que de voir ce nombre infini de femmelettes, et d'hommes non moins femmes qu'elles, quand ils ont trop mangé, trop bu, trop veillé, appeler auprès d'eux pour un mal de tête un médecin, l'invoquer comme un dieu, lui demander le miracle de faire subsister ensemble l'intempérance et la santé, et donner un écu à ce dieu qui rit de leur faiblesse."

"That which makes us have no need  
Of physic, that's physic indeed."



Seeing what man has made of the healing art, we might almost bid the sick forsake its oracles. Search the Pharmocopoeia from age to age, and you will know why Greeks have but one word to express poisons and drugs. Or look at surgery. Aesculapius, the god of medicine, was accoutred like the god of war. Fire and sword, to burn and to cut, *καίειν καὶ τέμνειν*, *secare et urere*, such is the equipment, such the function of the surgeon. Where blood is tainted indeed, and gangrene spreading, or where bones are crushed, cautery and the knife may still be needed; but as a rule Vegetarians may hope to recover without loss of limb from sorest wounds.

Our hospital is one of many heralds of a good time coming for animals; a dawning sense of their rights. Tennyson and Cardinal Manning, Professor Chandler, Miss Cobbe, Mr. E. B. Nicholson, Mr. Howard Williams, Mr. Ernest Bell and Mr. H. S. Salt, have not lived in vain. Our Queen herself pleads earnestly for justice to the lower creation: "No civilisation," she says, "is complete which does not include the dumb and defenceless of God's creatures within the sphere of charity and mercy." There are papers, as the *Zoophilist* and *Band of Mercy*, school-readers issued by Mr. Bell, which enlighten the public conscience. Let us collect here a library of humanity. In general, we ask for gifts in kind. Vegetarians might easily relieve the officers from all necessity of spending a farthing on food or flowers.

"This is the dispute among Jews, Syrians, Egyptians, Romans; not whether holiness should be preferred to all things, and in all cases should be pursued, but whether it is holy to eat pig's flesh or not holy" (Epictet. i 22 §4).

Meeting this passage the other day in Epictetus, I bethought me of a droll rivalry. The office of counsel for the pig of civilisation is coveted, and in very different quarters. Several years ago I pointed out what seemed a wrong done by man to swine. In a state of nature they are lords of the forest. The Calydonian and Erymanthian boars tried the mettle of heroes and demigods. Pig-sticking is no child's play in India. Charging boars are likened in classical poetry, to the crash of thunderbolts. What is the sty-fed pig? A tub of wheezing lard, tottering on four crazy pegs, utterly unable to run. The prize pig in the Agricultural Hall, choked by fog, was found rotting by Professor Gamgee, when he came in mercy to end its pains. Its breath, as Chrysippus says, was given it as salt, to stay corruption. So much for the blessings of civilisation from the pig's point of view. From the other side, as Professor Newman proved, the pig's loss is no gain to us. Arabs freely eat pork from the wild animal, but loathe the tenant of the sty. "See," say they, "what garbage he eats." All this appeared to me a truism; but we live and learn. A moral philosopher, a famous surgeon, and a reformer of all and sundry, have spoken. *Roma locuta est: causa finita est.*

Mr. Leslie Stephen, lecturing to the Ethical Society, rebuked the hypocrisy of Vegetarians. We pretend, it seems, and pretend falsely, to abstain from flesh from motives of humanity. Your flesh-eaters, so Mr. Stephen taught the gaping moralists, are piggie's true friends. To them he owes the light of life, a career of unbroken bliss, no work, enough to eat and to spare, a speedy death; a very paradise to hogs of Epicurus' herd. Mr. Salt makes mincemeat of this Pharisaism. The pig potential can bear Vegetarians no grudge for not bringing him into the world; nonentity knows neither fears nor hopes; the pig actual, on the other hand, has (as I have shewn) a very real grievance against his butchers; they first debauch, then kill and eat him; nay, unkindest cut of all, pose as his saviours, moved by unselfish love. Such, if it like your honours, is nineteenth century "altruism."

Sir Henry Thompson, speaking for the body, as Mr. Stephen for the mind, outbids the philosopher. Carnivorous man, in this gospel for the age, is a "Vice-Providence," from whom oxen, sheep, pigs, hold their being. How little this Vice-Providence betters the handiwork of Divine Providence, I have shewn. Sir Henry's current article, I may had, harps on the old string. Years ago\* I dealt with his cavils. Regarded as you please, philologically or historically, nothing in the name Vegetarian bars the free use of honey, eggs, milk, and its products. We never sailed under false colours. V.E.M.—Vegetables, Eggs, Milk—stands emblazoned on the forehead of our VEGETARIAN MESSENGER. Sir Henry still derives Vegetarian from Vegetable, which, as Euclid has it, is absurd. When I first grappled with Vegetarianism, I read and inwardly digested many thousand pages of dietetic law, and took counsel with the surviving leaders. Mr. Stephen and Sir Henry Thompson speak from outside, at random, without first-hand knowledge. They are wise in their generation, and take a just measure of their public. To me, I confess, cap and bells sit ill on Professors of Science, Moral or Natural. When next they assault our stronghold, I invite them to the third realm of Philosophy, namely, Logic, where as yet they are sadly to seek.†

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\* *What is Vegetarianism?* Speech at the Annual Meeting of the Vegetarian Society, held at Manchester, October 14th, 1885. Now included in *Plain Living and High Thinking*, Selected Sermons and Addresses. Vegetarian Jubilee Library, vol. iii. London: The Ideal Publishing Union, 1897. pp. 18-42. Also on sale as a separate pamphlet, revised in 1898.

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† *Stage direction*.—Chorus of Pigs, kneeling before the pork butcher. Mr. Stephen directing, Sir Henry Thompson leading:

Him first to love great right and reason is,  
Who first to us our life and being gave.

These two Mentors survey with smug complacency the life of the pig. His exodus it is that kindles the noble rage of our third censor, the latter-day prophet, W. T. Stead. In effect he cries: "Let me die the death of the Chicago hog, and let my last end be like his." He did not behold with his eyes the monster shambles, but yearns on hearsay for the porcine Euthanasia. *De gustibus non est disputandum. Chacun à son goût.*

I wind up with a voice or two from the past. Fellowship of the wise may comfort us in loneliness. "*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*"

Says Galen (*de sanitate tuenda* vi 14 fin. cf. Xen. mem. iv 7 § 9. Cic. off. ii § 86. Plut. ii 136e seq. Tac. an. iv 46, Suet. Tiber. 68): "Men of culture, who watch the effects of various meats and drinks, and of exercise, will have little need of physicians."

Says Seneca (ep. 95 § 18); "Many dishes many diseases"; again (ib. § 23): "Be not startled by the multitude of diseases; count the cooks."

May all physicians, sisters, nurses, who minister in these wards, labour in the spirit of the oath of Hippocrates (*The Genuine Works of Hippocrates*, translated by Francis Adams, Sydenham Society, 1849, ii 779-780):

"I swear by Apollo the physician, and Aesculapius, and Health, and Allheal, and all the gods and goddesses, that according to my ability and judgment, I will keep this Oath and this stipulation—to reckon him who taught me this Art equally dear to me as my parents, to share my substance with him, and relieve his necessities if required; to look upon his offspring on the same footing as my own brothers, and to teach them this Art, if they shall wish to learn it, without fee or stipulation; and that by precept, lecture, and every other mode of instruction, I will impart a knowledge of the Art to my own sons and those of my teachers, and to disciples bound by a stipulation and oath according to the law of medicine, but to none others. I will follow that system of regimen, which according to my ability and judgement, I consider for the benefit of my patients, and abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous. I will give no deadly medicine to anyone if asked, nor suggest any such counsel; and in like manner I will not give to a woman a pessary to produce abortion. With purity and with holiness I will pass my life and practise my Art. . . . Into whatever houses I enter I will go into them for the benefit of the sick, and will abstain from every voluntary act of mischief and corruption; and, further, from the seduction of females or males, or freemen and slaves. Whatever, in connexion with my professional practice, or not in connexion with it, I see or hear, in the life of men, which ought not to be spoken of abroad, I will not divulge, as reckoning that all such should be kept secret. While I continue to keep this oath unviolated, may it be granted me to enjoy life, and the practice of the Art, respected by all men, in all times! But should I trespass and violate this oath, may the reverse be my lot!"

By the Same Author.

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